

WORDS & VISION

UCFV Faculty & Staff Association Newsletter

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From the Editor

Reality Checks 1, 2, 3

✓ No, it wasn't just a dream.
Welcome back to reality.

If you're suffering from Post-Holiday Depression Syndrome (PHDS), don't panic. Memory loss is only temporary. Familiarity breeds context. So relax, take a stress tab, retrace your steps through the halls and/or some old course outlines. Pretty soon it will all come back in a thrilling rush: the photocopy machine six digit key-in, your department's budget code, the full rich pageant of computer passwords,

out-of-district phone sequences, even the names of office mates and/or colleagues — plus that vital number for take-out sushi. We in new building 'D' accept that, as guinea pigs in an architectural dis-orientation experiment, the recovery process will take longer.

A simple bar code tattooed on everyone's inside left wrist would take care of these awkward transitional periods — one swish and you're in — but opposition on the grounds of 'inhumane working conditions' continues to be a hurdle. Picky, picky.

✓ Of course, the real problem is that this workplace keeps shifting in terms of facilities and personnel. Where are those expense claim forms, anyway? More to the point, though, are the people who move up or down, and still others who just move along. Here we are at the start of another hectic year, embarking on a new president search, seeking someone to embody the vision of our collective purpose (plus looking for a new dean) — and delving into yet another period of institutional navel-gazing to determine what kind of place this really is and how it fits the unfolding cosmos.

Not that it's necessarily a bad thing to re-configure; maybe this is even a good point in our evolution

to pause and think through future directions and goals — making virtue out of necessity. But almost everyone I talk to is worried about working in an unstable and discontinuous environment; after all, Education is a fairly conservative enterprise. Whatever we do the next few months will certainly be disruptive and disturbing; so we need to prepare ourselves accordingly for still more changes, and yadda, yadda, yadda....

How often have we heard this kind of 'advice', especially in the last five years? Let's actually do something about it instead of merely talk.

What about aroma therapy, for starters? Fragrant clary sage oil, sweet lavender sachets, marjoram tea, frankincense diffusers, little ylang-ylang candles glowing on every desk — all to promote those

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Editor: Richard Dubansk

Secretarial Support: Fenella Sobchuk

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Contributions and ideas are welcomed from all FSA members.

For more information or comments about Words & Vision, contact the FSA Office, local 4530.

*UCFV Faculty and Staff Association
33844 King Road, Abbotsford, BC V2S 7M9.
Tel: 854-4530 FAX: 853-9540*

soothing, balancing, calming feelings. Or maybe compulsory past-life regressions would be helpful, to ensure an authentic sense of continuity and connection. A Reike therapist on campus would be handy, to relieve those tension-knotted muscles induced by the contemplation of potential change.

We could also institute crystal gazing sessions at the start of each computer workshop; seminars with Buddhist monks on the transmutability of all things; even a new Zen koan to greet you on your Aspen each and every morning (e.g., "What is the sound of a paradigm shifting?"); and your own personal mantra — sort of a 'soul password' — developed, naturally, by Personnel's very own consulting astrologer. The caf could pitch in too, switching to a more harmonious diet of brown rice, felaful burgers, tofu shakes, barley water, camomile and Sleepy Bear teas, etc. And for really hard cases, there's always good old cranio-sacral therapy, where a (one hopes competent) practitioner realigns the plates, pia mater, etc. in your skull, for better general reception; of course, over-manipulation = brain damage, but hey, ya gotta expect losses on the road to True Serenity.

✓ At any rate, you'll be pleased to know that while you frolicked heedlessly in far-flung fleshpots, the newly elected FSA Executive toiled heroically all summer on our behalf, through crisis after crisis; some members even sacrificed and/or altered holiday plans. What a team — with a commitment to being as user-friendly as possible. Check out the Executive Profile, coming soon to a mailbox near you.

If you want to know what this less virtuous member did on vacation — plus the Gaelic adventures of another Richard, and more — see articles below, gentle reader. There is no Treasurer's Report this issue, by the way. Ian McAskill felt a patch of his usual Pinteresque prose was unnecessary to gloss the Auditor's Report; if you do have questions, though, he'd be happy to answer them, at 4299.

-Richard Dubanski

President's Report

Ever since most of us arrived back at UCFV from our various summer pursuits, I've been asked, on almost a daily basis, whether I'm enjoying my new job as FSA President. With three months of my term now behind me, I can say with some confidence that this is not the kind of job that one can actually enjoy (unless I was willing to reveal to the world any masochistic tendencies I might have). However, it certainly is interesting, and I'm learning plenty. My only hope is that I can stay one step ahead, because there's so much to know. Before I go any further, I want to express my gratitude to Past President Dale Box for staying available with his encouragement, experience, and advice.

I've also been asked, by my family and friends, just what exactly it is that the FSA President does. So I thought I would allow you to be privy to my diary for the past few months, to give you some idea...

Dear Diary

• June 6

Wait a minute! I'm not officially the President until the 9th! But Dale Box couldn't attend the FSA Executive retreat, so I was expected to chair the discussions. This annual June retreat marks the formal changing of the guard, as outgoing and incoming officers meet for two days at Manning Park. The retreat gives us an opportunity to learn from the "old" executive, and to set some priorities for the coming year. At this year's event, discussions took place over a wide variety of issues, including the FSA's role in the development of a UCFV code of ethics, scenarios for collective bargaining for 1998, and developing a shop steward system.

One of the goals of this year's executive is to encourage our members to see each of the 20 or so Executive officers as a contact point for the Association. (Accordingly, you will soon be receiving our first "Profile," which will give you a bit of information about each one of us. We want to encourage you to feel free to call any one of us if you have questions, concerns or suggestions.)

• June 12-14

I am welcomed into the august and mysterious company of CIEA's Presidents' Council. (For those of you who do not know, or have forgotten, the Presidents' Council consists of all of the presidents of the different faculty associations that make up the membership of CIEA.) The first day was primarily an orientation for those of us who were new to the group, to give us some background on CIEA and the role of Presidents' Council. (If any of you

are interested in the details — drop by and see me!) Day two was our actual meeting, and on day three, we joined with the people responsible for bargaining in our various institutions — in our case Contract Chair Moira Gutteridge — to discuss strategy and content for bargaining in 1998.

- June 19

UCFV Convocation. Outgoing President Dale Box made the official FSA representation at this event, which allowed me to celebrate with my students as one of my last duties as Program Head of the Library and Information Technology Program. I've attended every Convocation since 1989, and always find this a wonderful time to celebrate our students' — and our — successes.

- June 20

FSA Executive meeting to discuss the contract proposal generated by Moira Gutteridge and the negotiating team. After review and discussion, the Executive votes to accept the proposal and recommend it to the membership for ratification.

- June 25

UCFV Board Meeting. One of my regular responsibilities will be to attend the Board's Committee of the Whole meetings on the last Wednesday of the month, and the formal Board meetings on the first Wednesday. My job will be to listen for things that may affect the membership, ask questions and provide information, and to make a formal report.

- July - August

Doesn't anyone know that we're on vacation? I guess the FSA isn't allowed to take a holiday. Between Bev Lowen, Dale Box, David

Morosan, and me, we manage to deal with the issues that were left over from the spring, or that emerged over the summer. This was a good reminder to me that there are a number of departments for whom summer is anything but a quiet time — Counselling and Advising, Admissions and Records, etc., all have a full contingent of staff available to serve students.

Looking Ahead

But enough remembrance of things past. As I look ahead to the next few months, I see a number of important issues that will be occupying the FSA's time and attention.

The resignation of Peter Jones marks the beginning of a period of change that will last at least a year, and probably longer. Peter will be easing out of his role throughout the fall, and by January, according to Board Chair Noel Hall, we will be dealing with an acting president. The FSA will certainly follow with interest, and probably participate in, the recruitment of a new president, who will then take over next summer. The President of UCFV has a critical role in establishing the climate for labour relations, and the FSA hopes that the Board will, in appointing both an acting and a permanent president, choose someone who is committed to both the collective agreement, and a consultative approach.

During the fall and early winter, the FSA will be setting up a number of committees and engaging in wide ranging discussions on a variety of issues, with the goal of developing some proposals to take to

management and/or the negotiating table. Workload and compensation for directors, department and program heads, and staff with instructional duties, achieving equity in faculty workload — these and other areas require some thoughtful work. If you are interested in helping to develop proposals on any of these issues, please give me a call.

And — I almost hesitate to bring this one up — once again we are facing the decision of whether to bargain our next collective agreement (the current proposal being for a one-year term expiring March 31, 1998) on the local level, centrally with other faculty associations represented by CIEA and the B.C. Government and Service Employees Union, or with some two-tiered combination of local and central bargaining. CIEA is pushing for the two-tiered approach, PSEA (Post Secondary Employers' Association) is adamant that bargaining will either be centralized or local, but not both, and no one knows what stand the Ministry of Education will take. All of this will factor into the decision the membership will have to make as to whether the FSA will participate at a central table, should there be one. We will be watching the situation closely over the next few months.

Well, that's about it for me. My head reels with the many things that the FSA is (and should be) involved in right now — or is it this beginning-of-term cold that is making me dizzy? It's time to get back to work.

-Kim Isaac

Faculty Grievance Report

After my first few months as Faculty Grievance Chair, I can report both that I have enjoyed, and been overwhelmed by the work. As Kim has described, things started with a bang. Before I had officially started the job, Kim and I found ourselves huddled in her office (often with Dale and Bev), trying desperately to make sense of our collective agreement, CIEA's policy and procedures guide, the UCFV policy manual, the BC Labour Code, and the more-or-less related practices we follow at UCFV to implement our systems for education, budgeting, employee hiring, employee discipline, employee supervision, employee evaluation, information management etc. I won't pretend that we have all this sorted out now. At this point, I just want to express how grateful I am to have had Kim and Bev so constantly available. In turn, the three of us are especially appreciative of Dale who wasn't obliged to work as hard as he did for us, as past president. I am also extremely grateful to have had the well-reasoned advice and warm support provided by David Piasta and other members of CIEA. (Sorry, Ian.) I have other thanks to offer, but, for now, back to being overwhelmed.

Those of you who listened to me talk about this job before I had it may recall that I was concerned about the need for UCFV to become more conscious of the "due process" aspect of decision-making. It wasn't a concern I developed on my own; I have heard complaints and fears

about this issue from many colleagues. My concern for this hasn't diminished in the past few months. It has become somewhat more focused and concrete, however. Let me outline some of these concerns. They will serve as somewhat of an agenda for me this year, and will keep me on an overwhelmed 'edge', I suspect.

Top Five List

Reasons FSA members don't read their collective agreement (or the policy manual):

1. Nobody else reads it!
2. Don't know where it is/don't have a copy.
3. It seems to be written in a foreign language.
4. I tried to read it once, but it seemed to contradict itself/it confuses me.
5. I spent a whole day going through it once, but couldn't figure out how it applied to my job.

If you nodded to yourself self-consciously, you are part of the problem. But, so am I. Further, I have heard confessions from several other FSA Executive members, and senior administrators as well.

My role as Faculty Grievance Chair is essentially to ensure that FSA members' rights and privileges are maintained in accordance with these documents, whenever members feel they are being treated unfairly. Since relatively few people are confident that they know what is provided for them in the collective agreement, it should not be surprising that many grievances arise either i) when an FSA member

(or administrator) has treated someone else in a manner inconsistent with the collective agreement, or ii) when the member is being treated properly according to the collective agreement, but feels unfairly treated because the practice isn't being maintained with other colleagues. There are several potentially disturbing problems this creates. I have promised to elaborate on these in future issues of *Words & Vision*. For now, let me outline just a few items of the work agenda coming out of the Top Five List.

First, with regard to #1 and #2, we have to change this! A frightening proportion of our collective agreement needs to be updated or amended just to reflect the current practices we presently enjoy, and to extend them to areas of growth at UCFV. This means we need FSA members to get involved in the development of policy and our contract, and to support the FSA Executive when we call for feedback. It won't be easy. It is, of course, tempting to make the usual comparisons of this with root canal work and drying paint. In the meantime, we should be OK without the necessary explicit language in our policies or collective agreement as long as there is no substantial change in the level of goodwill that keeps things running so smoothly now. In other words, we are OK as long as there aren't any substantial changes on the UCFV board of governors, our senior administration, or the provincial government. YIKES!

With regard to #3 and #4, the readability and sensibility of some key areas of the collective agreement and the policy manual have already

been identified as requiring action. Barry Bompas has proposed that the management and the FSA should undertake to clarify some specific areas of the contract pertaining to probationary periods and contract conversions, and to clarify what the interpretations of these areas have been in the past. On the policy manual side, the new Director of Student Services, Cheryl Dahl, has initiated a review of a group of policies including harassment, ombuds, student conduct, and student appeal, in order to make them better coordinated and more accessible. I have pushed (against very little resistance) to have a Reader's Digest version of some of these documents written, to be included in course outlines, the UCFV calendar, etc. These efforts will require scrutiny and feedback from the FSA membership at large, as well as your support and goodwill.

As for #5, there are several areas of UCFV which do not seem to easily fit the current contract language regarding evaluations, SACs, contract renewal, and pay scales. FSA members will unfortunately identify with point #5 if they are categories such as Continuing Education employees, distributed learning instructor, laboratory instructor, daycare worker, and others. The FSA has a lot of work to do here. To state that we are short of time and resources would be trite.

Finally, I want to turn back to the theme of thanks. As you may have anticipated by now, a large part of my motivation for writing this type of report is to give me an opportunity to plead for your patience. I will repeat this plea when you approach me with a question and I respond that

I need research time, when you would prefer that I dispense a definitive, immediate answer. The final point I feel I need to make in my first report as Grievance Chair, is to thank those of you who have already granted this patience, or have expressed other forms of support. The role of the union at UCFV, and the role of a grievance chair, both tend to be viewed with guarded skepticism by some, at least until good will is demonstrated or a productive posture has been observed. To those who have already given us, and me, the benefit of the doubt in this regard: thank you!

-David Morosan

Staff Grievance Chair Report

After the very sad, yet momentous, events of last week — Princess Diana and Mother Teresa's deaths — I feel that any FSA news I have to report is rather insignificant in comparison. It seems *everyone* has been discussing and reflecting on how these two extraordinary women have had such an impact on so many millions of people world wide. In their own unique, gentle, compassionate ways they have done more to unite human kind, in love and understanding, than all the religious and political leaders of the modern age.

It is unlikely anyone reading this has met either Princess Diana or Mother Teresa; nonetheless, through the media, they have long been a

part of our lives. We have loved and admired them, and felt connected to them in some way. They were two shining beacons in an age in which we tend to focus on humanity's dark side. Princess Diana and Mother Teresa brought little talked about, yet major, issues to the fore. They have shown us that in a world where poverty, sickness, and desperation are the rule, an individual can make a difference. They were the best humanity had to offer and now they are gone. And, as is the case when we lose someone dear, many of us are experiencing feelings of bewilderment and confusion, wondering how life can ever be the same without those two bright lights, living angels — if you will — gracing our world. But life goes on, and whether for better because of their influence, or worse because they are gone, remains to be seen.

With an eye to world events, we have also been dealing with other more personal issues in our own little corner of the globe. These issues are inconsequential to people outside the UCFV community, but to us they are significant happenings which greatly affect our lives. Of all our concerns of late, Dr. Jones' resignation will have the most profound effect on all employees, as his withdrawal from the helm will most definitely influence the direction UCFV takes over the next few years.

The Chilliwack flood is another event that, while not earth-shattering news, certainly had an enormous effect on the day-to-day lives of many of our faculty, staff and students.

All of us — Kim Isaac, David Morosan, Dale Box, Fenella

Sobchuk and I — have had a really busy summer with our share of problems as well. Since May I have grieved, at the informal stage, the College's applications of Articles 1.2, 13.1, 13.6, and 18.2 of the Collective Agreement, Article 4.02 of the Multi-institutional Framework Agreement, and the Letter of Agreement on Co-op Students. All grievances were sustained. We have also been dealing with several ongoing matters that are potential grievances or harassment cases, depending on which way the complainant wants to go. All these disputes are the typical kind of stuff that the FSA President and Grievance Chairs handle on a daily basis, and it's what we expect. What we have been hearing lately, especially from staff, which is becoming increasingly distressing, is that members are afraid to speak up, afraid to come to the union, afraid to go to Employee Relations because they are fearful of losing their jobs. In too many cases we hear of violations of members' rights through a third party, and although we are grateful that the problem came to our attention, it could be dealt with far more quickly if the wronged party came forward.

Often, too, members come to us with horrendous stories of Collective Agreement and human rights violations, then ask us not to do anything about it because they don't want to be seen as trouble makers and jeopardize their jobs. I cannot stress enough that neither the Union nor Employee Relations is going to label employees 'trouble makers' if they come forward with a legitimate complaint. If you are not sure if you have a legitimate complaint or not, call or come to the union and ask us. We will be more than happy to speak to you; that's what we are here for.

After all that, there is some good news, believe it or not — Jacqueline, our Admin. Assistant — had her baby at the end of July — a boy, Ciaran, and a little sweetheart he is too. Mother, father and baby are doing well. Martin Silverstein, our First Faculty VP, has just received his Ph.D in Justice Studies from Arizona State University. YEAH MARTIN!!!

The FSA Chilliwack office has moved again, this time to a real office with a window, rather than an old class room. We are very happy

with the new location which is #17 in the motel, down by the switchboard.

There have been several staff postings and placements lately. As a matter of fact there have been so many secondments, I can't keep track and don't know who's working where these days.

This report will go to print after the EGM on our contract. I am expecting it, the contract, to be ratified, but then you never know.

I am anticipating a very busy, productive year for the FSA. We already have a large agenda and we've only just begun. Our executive is made up of a great bunch and I'm really looking forward to working with them. As your elected representatives we make a lot of decisions on your behalf, but we need your input to make the correct decisions, so please do not hesitate to call or come to the FSA offices if you have concerns, questions or ideas. We want to hear from you.

-Bev Lowen

Auditor's Report

To the Members of Faculty and Staff Association University College of the Fraser Valley

We have reviewed the balance sheet of Faculty and Staff Association University College of the Fraser Valley as at March 31, 1997 and the statements of revenue and expenditures and members' surplus for the year then ended. Our review was made in accordance with generally accepted standards for review engagements and accordingly consisted primarily of enquiry, analytical procedures and discussion related to information supplied to us by the association.

A review does not constitute an audit and consequently we do not express an audit opinion on these financial statements.

Based on our review nothing has come to our attention that causes us to believe that these financial statements are not, in all material respects, in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

September 1997

	1997	1996
Revenue		
Dues and fees	\$ 326,822	\$ 305,453
Interest	<u>5,252</u>	<u>11,367</u>
	<u>332,074</u>	<u>316,820</u>
Expenses		
Bank charges and interest	21	21
Donations	1,700	3,685
CIEA conference	1,219	500
Joint funding	4,000	10,500
Licences, dues and fees	135,373	134,490
Office	9,866	8,452
Professional fees	1,240	3,509
Release time	86,318	86,297
Retreats	2,586	3,062
Socials	3,325	2,183
Special projects	-	288
Travel and promotion	2,367	3,448
Wages and benefits	<u>65,755</u>	<u>41,456</u>
	<u>313,770</u>	<u>297,891</u>
Excess of Revenue over Expenditures	18,304	18,929
Members' Surplus, Beginning of Year	<u>171,520</u>	<u>152,591</u>
Members' Surplus, End of Year	<u>\$ 189,824</u>	<u>\$ 171,520</u>

ASSETS

	1997	1996
Current Assets		
Cash	\$ 47,636	\$ 21,807
Short-term investments (Note 2)	135,735	130,636
Accrued interest receivable	1,234	6,033
Membership dues receivable	29,713	27,690
Loans receivable	<u>-</u>	<u>450</u>
	214,318	186,616
Furniture and Equipment	<u>20,064</u>	<u>17,011</u>
	<u>\$ 234,382</u>	<u>\$ 203,627</u>

LIABILITIES AND SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY

Current Liabilities		
Accounts payable	\$ <u>44,558</u>	\$ <u>32,107</u>
Members' Surplus	<u>189,824</u>	<u>171,520</u>
	<u>\$ 234,382</u>	<u>\$ 203,627</u>

1. Accounting Policies

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, applied on a basis consistent with that of the preceding year.

a) Short-term Investments -

The short-term investments are recorded at cost.

b) Furniture and Equipment -

Furniture and equipment is recorded at cost. It is the policy of the association not to provide for the amortization of the furniture and equipment.

2. Short-term Investments

	1997	1996
Term Deposits:		
maturing April 1, 1996 earning interest at 7.125%	\$ -	\$ 25,000
maturing April 1, 1996 earning interest at 7.125%	-	25,000
maturing June 22, 1996 earning interest at 6.00%	-	5,000
maturing October 1, 1997 earning interest at 4.50%	25,000	-
maturing October 1, 1997 earning interest at 4.50%	30,000	-
 B.C. Savings Bonds, 6.75%, maturity date October 15, 1998 (Market Value \$80063)	 80,063	 75,000
 First Heritage Savings Credit Union equity shares	 <u>672</u>	 <u>636</u>
	 \$ <u>135,735</u>	 \$ <u>130,636</u>

3. Statement of Changes in Financial Position

A statement of changes in financial position has not been included with these financial statements as it is not considered essential to an understanding of the company and its financial situation.

Peter O'Toole and "Tortles" on the Road to Dingle

It's 7 pm on a balmy summer evening in Eglington Street, Galway, southern Ireland. I'm into my third white wine and contemplating a prolonged assault on the smoked salmon and oyster canapes. Standing next to me is Peter O'Toole — yes *the* Peter O'Toole — I'm telling him how much I have enjoyed and admired his work and trying not to descend too swiftly into a mire of obsequious blather. O'Toole is sensibly drinking what looks like plain mineral water. He is quite gracious in the face of my sycophantic attentions, or is that perhaps a look of polite bemusement that occupies his skeletal features as I ramble on, rubber-tongued, at the presence of a theatrical icon. He's tall, much taller than I expected, and painfully thin. So thin that I almost expect him to keel over slowly like some long-legged, half starved seabird, should one of the many waiters plying their trade brush past him too closely. His skin has the brittle, opaque look of fresh parchment, but he still has a commanding presence, and he is immaculately turned out in a dark blue suit, dove grey waistcoat and silk cravat. I've almost run out of things to say; and other potential sycophants are hovering in the wings. O'Toole senses this and my dry discomfort. "Thank you so much," he says, proffering a parchment had to be shaken; then leans down towards my head inclined as if to impart some esoteric information of great important. I lean towards him

to catch this confidence but the rising murmur of the impatient crowd surrounding us drowns out his words and ...

It's three days later, on the bus, on the road to Dingle, County Kerry, and a tiny fist is pummelling my arm, insistent, demanding. I glance down, reluctant to transfer my gaze from the stunningly beautiful coastline, into a pair of light green eyes, chock full of the curiosity and excitement of being five years old. My assailant is pointing animatedly at a round plastic bag on her knee; the bag appears to have liquid swirling about in the bottom. I'm visited by a sudden flashback from childhood days: returning from the local summer fair, with jam jars containing various minions of the deep, that in short order passed on to meet their maker. This prompts me to the unavoidable question: "So what have you got there then," I venture, "a goldfish?" I see there is no chance of returning to the scenery until the obligatory adult-child pleasantries have been observed. "No," she replies earnestly, light brown curls shaking. "I have a tortle!" Her west coast lilt, which is quite delightful, has me puzzled. "A what?" "A tortle, a tortle d'ya see?" I lean down and across, following her guiding finger to the rim of the bag.

Inside the white, sterile globe of the contained, swimming vainly towards a nonexistent shore, is the epitome of solitary futility: a tiny, sad grey-green turtle. "Ah, yes, a turtle. I see." What is one expected to say next in such situations? I stick with the tried and true: "So, what's his name then?" "I've no

name for him yet," replies the soft lilt, "he's just a tortle." "Well, what do you think you might call him, when you decide?" "I don't know; sometimes they die you see." Her logic is indisputable. Why give the connective tissue of a name, bestowing meaning and perhaps love, to something that might one day quickly depart without warning. I'm temporarily lost for words. Her mother, who sits a few rows ahead of us on the crowded bus, smiles knowingly back at me with an apologetic shrug. She has, no doubt, been through many such discussions herself.

My tiny travelling companion continues "But they don't ever die in the pet shops do they?" "Well, I'm not sure," I blunder, "I expect they do sometimes; but they just don't tell people about it you see. They um - put them away - the ones that die and just sell the live ones, I think." This sounds banal and unconvincing to me; but she does not question it. Then after a few moments of contemplative silence: "Why do they die, d'ya think, the tortles?" "Well, I guess they get a little frightened, being in a place that's not their real home." Another silence, longer this time, then: "My cousin's friend's tortle got up on the stove and was cooked and they had him for supper," she said.

Now it's my turn to stay silent, as I contemplate the vivid, creative horror of childhood imagination. "Ah, yes, well, that's too bad. You must look after them you see; you can't just let them wander around the house. Do you have somewhere to keep him when you get home?" "I do, I have a small cage, with some water and grass in it and it's not

beside the stove." "Good, that's good. And you know you mustn't handle him too much either. Don't take him out of his cage and play with him all the time, you might hurt him, OK?" The curls, perched over the rim of the bag, bob in agreement.

I look out again at the low, white clouds that hug the hillsides and the handfuls of grey sheep and rocks scattered across a landscape occasionally illuminated by a stray shaft of sunlight. Another forty-five minutes and I'll be in Dingle, I'll have time to check into my Bed-and-Breakfast reservation, then out for a quick pint of Guinness and a leisurely survey of the town before supper. My thoughts drift back to Galway, my place of departure that morning: an open, welcoming city, boasting four live theatres, a picturesque University College, innumerable good pubs and seafood restaurants, and pleasant tree-lined canals that lead to a spacious bay, where one evening I had made a particular point of watching the sun go down. So far Eire had been good to me on my first visit: a superb production of Oscar Wilde's *A Woman of No Importance* at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin; and a magic evening of pubs, Guinness and Irish music spent with the cast and crew of a production of W.B. Yeates' *On Baile's Strand* in Sligo. What, I wondered, would Dingle hold for me?

Then: "Do you think he's frightened now, the turtle?" "Well, yes, he could be, being on the bus and away from his friends the other turtles. So you must be kind to him and gentle. Then, maybe he won't die, he'll live a while longer." The head bobs again. "I'll put him in a bigger cage and I won't touch him

too much, just a bit, now and then." The green eyes glance up at me for confirmation. "Good, yes, that's good. He'll like that." Another long pause and then the tiny fist assaults my arm again. "I have an interest in ducks and chicks, I do." "You do?" "I do, and I have my own forest too." "Well, that's great, your own forest, you're very lucky. Where is it?" "It's behind our house, at the bottom of the garden." "Wonderful, and it's all your forest?" "It is!" "And you've your chicks and ducks in your garden too?" "No, they're at my aunties'; but I have an interest in them there, and I go to see them sometimes." "Great, that's great. So your forest is behind your house then. And where is that?" "It's not far, just around the corner. I'll show you when we get there."

The bus is slowing down to make what seems to be an unscheduled stop. The small girl leans across and points to a copse of trees and underbrush, behind a cottage at the bottom of the hill. A bubbling stream runs through the back yard of the house and into the "wood." It's picture perfect, almost too good to be true: an archetypal setting for childhood adventures featuring turtles, princes, witches and faeries, and a little girl with an interest in chicks and ducks.

I envy her innocence and the fecund childish imagination that has the opportunity to create a Gaelic fairytale in a world that few adults can enter. The bus grinds to a halt and my new-found friend stands, cradling her precious cargo. Her mother comes to the back of the bus and takes her hand. "I'm sorry," she says apologetically, "she'd talk

the back leg off a donkey, if you let her." "Oh, it's fine," I reply, "no problem, I enjoyed our conversation." They climb down into the now sunny street together; but I'm unable to watch them cross to the cottage as the bus pulls off quickly and turns a corner to continue its journey to Dingle.

Several times during this my first trip to Ireland, I had attempted, somewhat cynically, to reject any overly romantic view of "The Emerald Isle." Each time I'd done so, it had promptly stood up and slapped me in the face for my lack of faith. There are many unforgettable pictures to remember: the bearded busker in Grafton Street, Dublin, who played a wicked Blues guitar for the evening strollers who crowded appreciatively around him; the puppeteer in Galway who charmed the wide-eyed children and their parents with his Irish Grannie and mad violinist creations; the Irish football game I eventually watched in Dingle, on a cold wet Saturday afternoon; the sparkling ribald banter of the taxi driver who allowed me to share his cab with two sweet, elderly nuns in plain clothing on my arrival in Galway; and once again in Galway, the beautiful, clear, keening voice of the thin, hungry-looking girl, singing for her supper in a backstreet doorway. Ah yes, Galway ...

Peter O'Toole peers down and fixes me with his watery, compelling blue eyes. "That was for who?" he inquires politely. "Rick who?" "Mawson," I reply, "Rick Mawson, M.A.W.S.O.N., please." He takes my copy of his autobiography, opens it to the first page and writes: To Rick Mawson from Peter O'Toole. Plain and simple. I had intended to

ask him to write something more theatrical and personal: 'Break a leg Rick, your friend Peter O'Toole.' But a sturdy matron from Houston, Texas, is gradually forcing her way between us, thrusting her freshly purchased copy of his book into O'Toole's hands. His face takes on a curiously blank expression, and his gaze sweeps the room, in search of rescue. What more do we want from him? He has made an appearance, read a moving extract from his book, answered questions, and now the unkindest cut of all: he must make small talk with a roomful of total strangers. The Irish Minister of Culture, Michael D. Higgins, catches O'Toole's eye, notes his distress and moves swiftly to his side, guiding him through the madding crowd to a small group of friends and family members in the corner of the room. The Texan follows in their wake, a determined huntress, not easily daunted. She will not return to Houston empty-handed. Lawrence of Arabia will surrender up his autograph or there will be an international incident, consular heads will roll!

I sink my remaining wine and head out the door, leaving Lawrence to his fate and the vagaries of celebrityhood. I've a ticket to see a travelling production of Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* at the Townhall Theatre in fifteen minutes, and "Tortles," brown curls and green eyes await me on the road to Dingle.

-Rick Mawson

A Geezer in Paris

C'est la Vie?

Don't know about you, but one thing I did this summer was to discover an antidote to change and discontinuity in the historicity and traditions of the Old World.

In Paris, life's patterns are fixed. On every block, a handful of *brasseries* in various brassy configurations (literally, since the amount of yellow metal originally determined the upscalability of such establishments), a couple of cafés, a few ragtag bars, several *charcuteries*, a *pâtisserie* or three, a *boulangerie* or two, and at least one lingerie shop: That about sums it up, the essentials.

Not to forget the *tabacs*, also one or two on every block. France is the last bastion *aux cigarettes*, with puffers welcome everywhere. It's still a romantic affectation, part of the existentialist black/white film *noir* French style. The wholehearted commitment to this addiction seems to derive from a crucial aspect of national character: defense of and nostalgia for all things identified as *très* French. The over-riding directive is that all traditions must be maintained — from smoking to wine drinking to bread eating, and so on.

Bars down by the Bastille, and elsewhere, are fairly busy by 10:00 a.m., which puts an interesting spin on 'happy hour', making it more of 'le happy day' concept. A small drop in average

citizen wine consumption becomes front page news, reported with dramatic emphasis as another disturbing signal of a dangerous decline in the "true French lifestyle." One also hears of governmental anxiety re *le supermarket* and its vicious production of tasteless 'factory bread,' robbing French youth of a crucial historical link to the past — sundering them from the true *baguette*, *pain de campagne*, and so on — hence a new State program in which schools are regularly visited by representatives armed with *baguettes* and infopacs. Now that's education.

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So, on the one hand, an admirable opposition to mediocrity and the flattening-out of a unique quality of life; on the other, obdurate pride in *très* French stuff that isn't, well, all that useful or chic

How else to explain the you-know -whats? One exposure to typical 'lavatory' facilities — another essential, come to think of it — bespeaks a very different orientation, a turn to the *primitif* so extreme that it doesn't make much sense these days: even modern cafés have very atavistic plumbing, and a bewildering range of it at that, weird contraptions you need infopacs to use. *Toilettes* that are post-13th century, however, can be equally confusing. Some, in fact, are bizarrely moderne, high-tech-Star-Trek plumbing. One surreal manifestation, encountered in a charming country inn deep in the south of France, whirred, buzzed, glowed, pulsated, and shape-shifted itself into a frenzy — well, you had to be there.

Whoever said you can measure a civilization's prominence by its plumbing would read into the French grandeur and chaos.

C'est la Mort

Another kind of permanence I discovered is on the spooky side. For one thing, a couple of weeks before it happened, I chanced to traverse the very spot where the Queen of Hearts was to meet her tabloid destiny. For another, I had already spent much of July hanging out in cemeteries across the country.

Some may envision repositories of eternal peace as moribund places, but the French create art out of every aspect of life, making even the contemplation of death, if not downright delightful, then certainly fascinating. A visit to a *cimetière* as historic as Père-Lachaise in Paris, for example, offers an encyclopedic browse through architectural and artistic styles from Gothic to post-modern, and much more besides.

Strolling down the cobblestoned *chemins* and avenues of this 'city' of endless repose — albeit dodging charging Citroëns and rocketing Renaults, for the racetrack driving habits of the locals are not inhibited by consecrated ground — you may commune with some of the most creative and generative spirits of all time. Lachaise's arty roll-call includes: Apollinaire, Balzac, Sarah Bernhardt, Bellini, Bizet, Callas, Chopin, Colette, Corot, Daumier, Delacroix, Isadora Duncan, Max Ernst, Heloïse *et* Abelard, Ingres, La Fontaine, Modigliani, Molière, Yves

Montand, Pissaro, Proust, Rossini, Seurat, Simone Signoret, Oscar Wilde. The memorials range from modest to monstrous, humble to histrionic — from plain markers to massive obelisks and house-sized mausoleums.

A trip to this famous burial ground also reveals some secrets of the living. Who do we cherish most? The grandest, most lavish monuments are to the great movers and shakers of their day: Casimir Perier, for instance, a once-celebrated *homme politique* who no one remembers now. Likewise for the city planners, historians, once-renowned teachers (alas), philosophers, and scientists; nobody much cares for their industrious ilk either. No, it's the artists who are the true immortals, and, interestingly, the most fervently remembered are musicians rather than writers or painters. (There is one clown, by the way, Achille Zavatta, but funnily enough I never did find his spot.)

On the day of my visit, Colette's striking black marble tomb was pristine, without a single flower, ditto Balzac, Seurat, etc. But Chopin's white stone shrine, based on an ascending dove motif, was touchingly laden with tributes: drenched in brilliant bouquets (lots of love-red roses); festooned with banners (proclaiming passionate Polish allegiance); and papered with poems (one to "The Rainmaker"), letters, and scrawled messages of everlasting adoration.

On a different musical note, I learned that the most popular site belongs not to the historic greats

but to the Lizard King, though the caretakers are getting fed up with all the associated hi-jinks. I followed the crowd to Jim Morrison and found a plain dark stone slab on a blank grave littered with single blossoms (wilted daisies mostly), cigarettes, joints, empty syringes, and other drug-related plastic. Fashionably black-clad international youth pushed in on all sides, some snapping pics, others just standing quiet, making me a bit geezer-shy and nostalgic for my own lost youth. I expected a hidden speaker to play "this is the end my only friend" — but nothing happened.

Anyway. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* I read of the phenomenon of American cemetery tourism, a growing industry it seems. Us geezers are getting in touch, feet-first, with mortal-coildom.

What about an educational tour along the lines of 'They'll Always Have Paris' — hmmm, or, perhaps, 'Permanent Parisians: The Grand Cemetery Tour'?

You could spend a week doing the rounds of Père-Lachaise, Montparnasse, *et al.* Each funereal visit would include a contemplative walk and talk on specific people, novels, artworks, etc., followed immediately by a life-affirming dinner at a nearby fine restaurant...

In the words of the immortal Tom-Tom Club: "What do you consider fun?"

-Richard Dubanski

McMusings

My son has a McJob. You know what McJobs are — they're the trend of the future: low wage, non-union, service sector positions that tend to offer little in the way of benefits or job security. These employers are notorious for their less-than-progressive labour practices, right? Well, I'm not so sure anymore.

Zach's McJob is with the real McCoy — a McDonald's restaurant in Chilliwack. When he was hired in April of 1995 he started, as most of the new employees do, at the bottom of the ladder, in a position he called Lobby. To prepare him for the responsibilities involved in doing Lobby, Zach was carefully trained on how to keep the eating area, washrooms and outside patio area clean. After he demonstrated some reliability and responsibility, Zach was promoted to Grill, and was trained to be able to accommodate both the breakfast menu and the standard menu. From

there, the range of tasks or jobs he has been given has expanded to include Window (taking orders and dealing with customers and cash up front); Drive-through (self-explanatory to those of us who frequent McD's); Crew Trainer (meaning that Zach can now train new employees in selected tasks); and most recently, Production Caller (the person responsible for ensuring that the right number of cheeseburgers are cooked and in the bin at any given time — too many means waste, too few means that customers have to wait). With each expansion or promotion in duties, Zach has received additional training shifts, to prepare him for the new responsibilities.

Every time Zach and his co-workers work through a particularly busy hour ("Mom! I did my first \$1600.00 hour at lunch today!"), everyone who was on shift is given some kind of reward or acknowledgment: a pin, a note in the personnel file, coupons for free meals, points towards a prize to be redeemed later. As well, employees

are regularly complimented when they do something well — and promptly corrected when they make mistakes.

Zach has a formal employee evaluation every six months. These evaluations incorporate comments and observations from all of the various supervisors who have worked with Zach over the preceding months. When he sits down with a manager to discuss the evaluation, together they set some goals for the next six month period. And if the preceding period has been a good one, he gets a raise.

A McJob? Well, probably. Zach makes barely more than minimum wage, receives only the benefits he's entitled to under the Labour Code, and never knows from week to week how many hours he will be working — nothing we would want to copy here at UCFV. However, this profit-driven mega-corporation does some things right, and from time to time I find myself wondering whether a fast food giant might in fact have something to teach a university-college.

-Kim Isaac





